



# NEWS RELEASE

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## USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT SEEKS PUBLIC COMMENT ON RENEWABLE ENERGY PROGRAM

WASHINGTON, Oct. 5, 2004 – Agriculture Acting Under Secretary for Rural Development Gilbert Gonzalez today announced the solicitation of public comment on proposed program rules for administering the renewable energy systems and energy efficiency improvements program.

“The program is part of President Bush’s energy plan to increase the utilization of renewable energy and improve energy efficiency for farmers, ranchers and rural small businesses,” said Gonzalez.

The Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvements program was created as part of the 2002 Farm Bill to assist farmers, ranchers, and rural small businesses develop renewable energy systems and make energy efficiency improvements to their operations. To date, the Bush Administration has committed nearly \$45 million in grant assistance to farmers, ranchers and rural businesses. The proposed rules are published in today’s *Federal Register*.

Gonzalez said that the purpose of publishing the proposed rule is to formalize the program guidelines for receiving and reviewing future loan and grant applications. With the publication of the proposed rule in the Federal Register, public comment will be accepted for 30 days.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development provides equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>.

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